

NEW YORK TIMES

June 78

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HSCA

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WES, THURSDAY, JUNE 8, 1978

## Letters

## Of Covert C.I.A. Actions and the Congress

To the Editor:

The article by Seymour Hersh on June 1 regarding Congressional oversight of the C.I.A.'s covert action program is misleading. "Evidence" is cited that both the Senate and House intelligence committees have approved covert actions "without serious questioning."

I cannot speak for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, but I can assure your readers that in the 10 months since the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence has been in existence, it has gone into the C.I.A.'s covert action program in great detail. The committee has received a number of briefings from the Director of Central Intelligence on this subject, during which the committee members thoroughly examined the C.I.A.'s covert action program. In addition, the Subcommittee on Oversight, chaired by Representative Les Aspin, has held five hearings delving into every aspect of covert action.

Moreover, as part of the annual budget authorization process, the Subcommittee on Program and Budget Authorization, chaired by Representative Bill Burlison, examined the risk and policy implications versus cost of

each of the C.I.A.'s covert action programs.

Your readers should also be aware that in accordance with the Hughes-Ryan Amendment, passed in 1974, no funds appropriated by Congress may be expended by or on behalf of the C.I.A. for covert operations unless the "President finds that each such operation is important to the national security of the United States and reports, in a timely fashion, a description and scope of such operation to the appropriate committees of Congress..." The Administration has agreed that the Senate and House Select Committees on Intelligence are among the appropriate committees to receive such reports. You will note that, contrary to the article's assertion, the law does not require the approval of Congress or of any of the "appropriate" committees before covert actions are carried out.

Let me explain how the process works. Once the President has made a finding in accordance with the Hughes-Ryan Amendment, our committee is so informed. The Director of Central Intelligence, Admiral Turner, has been meticulous in informing the committee of such findings, usually within hours after the President's

decision. The committee then sets a time, normally within a day or so, for Admiral Turner to brief the full committee on the covert operation.

Members have demanded great detail on each such activity. In addition, the committee has requested that Admiral Turner report back to the President any disagreement with any covert operation on the part of even one member of this committee.

Finally, let me point out that funds for operations of the C.I.A. must be authorized by this committee. In the future, as we receive the required reports from the Administration, not only can we make known to the President any dissatisfaction we may have with a particular covert operation but a majority of the committee can vote not to authorize such operations.

Far from being a rubber stamp, as suggested in the article, our committee is exercising close and continuing scrutiny over the covert actions of the C.I.A. If our ongoing investigation into the covert actions approval process confirms any loopholes, I am confident that the committee will recommend remedial legislation to the House of Representatives.

In sum, I believe the Hersh article presented a distorted picture of current realities. Congressional oversight of the C.I.A.'s covert activities, far from being lax, is vibrant, thorough and continuous.

(Rep.) EDWARD P. BOLAND  
Chairman, Permanent Select  
Committee on Intelligence  
Washington, June 1, 1978